

Grao en Lingua e Literatura Inglesas

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**Riddles in the Dark: A
Theoretical Approach to
Tolkien's *The Hobbit***

Directora:

Laura María Lojo Rodríguez



(Sinatura)

Alumno:

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Introduction

During my years as a student of English literature I have looked into a wide variety of novels, plays and poems, which belonged to many different authors and genres. However, most of these works had something in common: they were canonical texts. From Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* to Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* or Shakespeare's sonnets and plays, relevance in accordance with the English canon was observed as a primary criterion of selection, which is undoubtedly necessary knowledge for a prospective philologist.

However, during the course of some lectures on Comparative Literature I discovered a growing interest in non-canonical literature such as the folktale. Despite the fact that, as a reader I enjoy many of the canonical works that had been written through history I also find most appealing what is nowadays called "fantastic literature", and especially J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954). The idea of looking into *The Hobbit* as a fairy tale sprang after my reading of Vladimir Propp's seminal essay *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), in which the Russian author explained a series of functions as constitutive of the fairy tale genre that reminded me of some parts of Tolkien's novel.

The fairy tale genre has been relegated through history to a second-class literary form, as it evolved from the oral tradition to the "nursery" field. However, during the first half of the twentieth century, critics such as Propp or Tolkien himself started to show an interest in the fairy tale from a formal theoretical perspective, yet also discussing issues of content and readership, thus elevating the genre to an academic level. Later on in the century, other authors such as Bruno Bettelheim and Jack Zipes continued the analysis of this genre, adding new perspectives to the study of fairy tales. The aim of this work is to offer an approach to some theories concerning the analysis of the fairy tale genre, to then move on to an examination of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* within the framework of that theoretical background.

To achieve this aim, this essay has been informed by different foundational studies on the fairy tale genre, springing from Tolkien's own notion of the genre presented in his essay *On Fairy Stories* (1947), his major contribution to the analysis of the aforementioned genre. Moreover, other seminal works for the study of the fairy tale as a

literary genre had been taken into account, which are later used in my reading of Tolkien's novel.

However, in this process of reassessment of these theories, some conflictive concepts have appeared, namely the notion of the fairy tale as a *true* narrative which Tolkien puts forward in his essay, related to the consideration of fairy tales as children's literature.

Tolkien's use of the word "true" to define fairy tales derives from his idea that these narratives do not occur in the real world, but in an alternative one which he calls "Faërie", since the fantastic and magic elements which appear in this realm are "not true" in our world. Therefore, Tolkien's notion of a "true" narrative implies that the world in which fairy tales take place has its own regulations as an alternative, which are indeed "true" within this fictional universe. Furthermore, the reader's assumption of the "true" nature of this universe is for Tolkien crucial to have an effect on the reader, as will be subsequently explained.

This essay also addresses the question of fairy tales as children's literature, which is a rather complex debate: some authors, such as Bettelheim or Zipes, understand that fairy tales are indeed children's literature, as they assume that this genre has a particular effect on them. However, I have positioned myself with Tolkien's view of the issue in considering that fairy tales should not be considered as children's literature, but rather the opposite, although children are not excluded from their readership.

This essay is divided in two major parts: the first one provides a theoretical approach to the fairy tale genre departing from Tolkien's notion of the fairy tale, to later move on to Propp's formalist approach and to subsequent studies of the genre by Bettelheim and Zipes, among others. The second part of the essay aims to examine Tolkien's *The Hobbit* in terms of the formal and semantics aspects pertaining to the fairy tale genre as established in the first part of this work.

The analysis of Tolkien's novel also follows a two-fold structure: in the first place, a formal approach to the novel will be given by following Tolkien's and Propp's notions of the genre, which spring from a formalist perspective. Finally, the second section offers an approach to the novel in terms of content, especially in what relates to Tolkien's notions of the fairy tale genre as a "true" narrative, by examining the fantastic

and magic element of the novel and the effects which these produce on the reader. In this sense, a brief approach to the debate of the fairy tale genre as children's literature will close this section, which departs from Jane Chance's analysis of the novel and from Tolkien's views on the issue.

*Child of the pure unclouded brow
And dreaming eyes of wonder!
Though time be fleet, and I and thou
Are half a life asunder,
Thy loving smile will surely hail
The love-gift of a fairy tale.*¹

1. **"The Love-Gift of a Fairy-Tale"**

1.1 Some Definitions through History

The fairy tale, or fairy story, is a literary genre that has often been undervalued by both scholars and readers, and yet it is much more powerful than we imagine. Fairy tales are capable of taking us into magical worlds in which the common laws of physics and logic do not apply; fairy stories make us believe in the impossible, they make us fantasize, they make us imagine. The aim of this essay is to examine J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) within the framework of the fairy tale as a literary genre.

There are many different approaches to the notion of the fairy tale; however, for the purpose of this text, I will focus mainly on four: J.R.R. Tolkien's own study of the genre in his essay *On Fairy Stories* (1947); Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of the Folk Tale* (1968); Jack Zipes' *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales* (2002), and Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1991).

1.1.1 Tolkien's Realm of Faërie

Tolkien draws on his own ideas on the genre of fairy stories to write *The Hobbit*. In what follows I will be examining Tolkien's major argumentations in order to move on to an analysis of the novel itself.²

¹ Carroll, Lewis. *Through the Looking Glass in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland; Through the Looking Glass; The Hunting of the Snark*. New York. The Modern Library, 193-? (159). For the complete poem see Appendix B.

² Zipes also comments on this: "Tolkien's comments are most significant for an understanding of his own fairy tales." (In *Breaking the Magic Spell*, 2002: 160).

Verlyn Flieger and Douglas A. Anderson say the following in the introduction to *On Fairy Stories*: “[The essay’s] chief concern is the essential nature of fairy-stories, their position in relationship to myth, the character of their intended audience, and their uses as a literary genre.” (2014:19) This is a very good point, and very important for the matter at hand. Tolkien’s understanding of the fairy-story does not comply with most approaches to the genre.

At the time that Tolkien studied the fairy tale the *OED* provided a three-fold definition for fairy tales, reproduced in Tolkien’s essay: “(a) a tale about fairies, or generally a fairy legend; with developed senses, (b) an unreal or incredible story, and (c) a falsehood.” (Tolkien 2014:28)³ This definition was for Tolkien at best insufficient, if not directly wrong. For the British author, fairy-stories

[...] are not in normal English usage stories about fairies or elves, but stories about Fairy, that is Faërie, the realm or state in which fairies have their being [...] Most good ‘fairy-stories’ are about the adventures of men in the Perilous Realm or upon its shadowy marches. (Tolkien: 32)

This idea has an immediate consequence on the fairy tale reader: whatever s/he is reading does not belong to this world. This is so because for Tolkien a good fairy tale needs to be *true* in some dimension, meaning that “it is at any rate essential to a genuine fairy-story, [...] that it should be presented as ‘true.’” (Tolkien: 35) Tolkien believed that a fairy tale could not be understood as *true* if it dealt with fantastic matters happening in this world, what he calls “Primary World” (Tolkien: 52), the world in which we live, such as the ones that appear in fairy-stories, because that would force the reader to believe things that he/she knows are not truly possible in this world, such as talking beasts, magic, etc. Tolkien’s conception of fairy tales is thus bound to an alternative world with its own measure of reality. However, all this is only a deconstruction of a definition that Tolkien does not actually provide. All he says (Tolkien: 32), in an attempt to define his idea of fairy-story, is the following:

The definition of a fairy-story [...] depend[s] [...] upon the nature of Faërie [...]. I will not attempt to define that, nor to describe it directly. It cannot be done. Faërie cannot be caught in

³ All quotes from Tolkien’s essay *On Fairy Stories* from here onwards belong to the 2014 edition by Flieger and Anderson.

a net of words; for it is one of its qualities to be indescribable, though not imperceptible. [...] I will say only this: a 'fairy-story' is one which touches on or uses Faërie, whatever its own main purpose may be: satire, adventure, morality, fantasy.

With this definition, Tolkien only emphasizes previously advanced ideas, namely that fairy tales are stories about what he calls the "realm of Faërie". However, Tolkien goes deeper into this definition by ruling out other types of tales that had been historically defined as such (by Andrew Lang in his *Fairy Books* for instance). Tolkien first excludes such tales as Jonathan Swift's "A Voyage to Lilliput", as its inclusion in fairy tale collections⁴ comes from the fact that "Lilliputians are small, even diminutive" (Tolkien: 34). According to the *OED* fairy tales were defined as "stories about fairies." Lang's confusion defining Swift's narrative as a fairy tale comes from a mistaken definition of Lilliputians as "fairies", as he seems to be following the lexicographer's definition of *fairy* that Tolkien quotes (and rejects) at the beginning of his essay, stating that fairies are "supernatural beings of diminutive size, in popular belief supposed to possess magical powers and to have great influence for good or evil over the affairs of man." (Tolkien: 28) As Tolkien sees it, Swift's narrative belongs to the traveller's tales class, as "such tales report many marvels, but they are marvels to be seen in this mortal world in some region of our own time and space; distance alone conceals them." (Tolkien: 34). Thus, it does not belong to the fairy-story taxonomy, as this would have to take place within the realm of Faërie. The British author also excludes the pure "Beast-fable" from fairy tales. Despite the fact that they are connected in a way, the beast-fable cannot take place in the Faërie realm, as there is no place for human beings in them, or their appearance is merely accessory (Tolkien: 36).

In his essay the British author also tried to provide an account of the origins of the fairy tale, and in doing so he also further develops his conception of the genre. For Tolkien fairy stories spring from the human mind, thus the writer of fairy stories becomes a "sub-creator", as he/she is producing a world that, as was said before, is true. Therefore, as he says in the text: "An essential power of Faërie is thus the power of making immediately effective by the will the visions of

⁴ This tale, first appearing in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* was included for instance in Lang's *Blue Fairy Book*, first published in 1889.

‘fantasy.’” (Tolkien: 42) “Fantasy”, as Tolkien describes it is the power of the human mind, “endowed with the powers of generalization and abstraction” (Tolkien: 41), to develop or create (through language) new forms, the world of Faërie, in the text: “But in such ‘fantasy’, as it is called, new form is made, Faërie begins, Man becomes a sub-creator.” (Tolkien: 42) Fantasy is thus one of the main features of fairy tales, and the writer’s major literary strategy to produce such fairy-story worlds. Moreover, fantasy, as the source of all that is within the realm of Faërie, is also the source of another basic fairy tale feature, Magic: “Fairy-stories as a whole have three faces: the Mystical [...]; the Magical [...]; and the Mirror of scorn and pity [...]. The essential face of Faërie is [...] the Magical.” (Tolkien: 44)

Furthermore, and in providing a definition of the genre, Tolkien discusses three major features of the fairy tale concerning their effect on the reader: Recovery, Escape and Consolation.

Tolkien believed that fairy-stories of *Recovery* helped the reader see familiar things from a new, refreshing perspective: “Recovery (which includes return and renewal of health) is a re-gaining – regaining of a clear view.” (Tolkien: 67) He was also convinced that fairy-stories were a method of *Escape*, even more so “fairy-stories are [...] today one of the most obvious and (to some) outrageous forms of ‘escapist’ literature.” (Tolkien: 69) From Tolkien’s perspective, fairy-tales allow the reader to escape from his time and from the evil of our world. Furthermore, the fairy-story goes beyond the escapism of our mere reality, but dives into more profound issues of human existence such as hunger, thirst, poverty, and death, which is for him the “oldest and deepest desire” of human kind. (Tolkien: 71-74)

However important these two functions may be for the reader of fairy-stories, Tolkien believed *Consolation* to be the most important feature of the three. This is what he calls *eucatastrophe*,⁵ the happy ending, which “all complete fairy-stories must have [...]. The eucatastrophic tale is the true form of the fairy-tale, and its highest function.” (Tolkien: 75) This idea is somehow similar to Aristotle’s *catharsis*, as the reader is enabled to experience powerful feelings (such as fear)

⁵ Tolkien coins the term by turning around the meaning of *catastrophe* (downturn of fortune in Greek tragedies) by adding the Greek prefix *eu* (‘good’). (Tolkien 2014:119 – Editors’ Commentary 98).

which will eventually lead to a process of liberation by means of the happy ending.⁶ Tolkien emphasizes the importance of the consolation as follows:

It is the mark of a good fairy-story, [...], that however wild its events, however fantastic or terrible the adventures, it can give to child or man that hears it, when the 'turn' comes, a catch of breath, a beat and lifting of the heart, near to (or indeed accompanied by) tears, as keen as that given by any form of literary art, and having a peculiar quality. (Tolkien: 75-76)

The above said leads us to conclude that Tolkien's definition of the fairy tale goes beyond the actual "attempt of definition" he provides in the essay *On Fairy Stories*, as he does not believe fairy-stories to be just "stories about Faërie" but also stories that spring from the human mind's capacity to fantasize, thus making the writer a kind of "sub-creator."

In short, Tolkien's conceives the fairy-story not only as a tale about Faërie but also as a narrative about humans in that realm. Furthermore, fairy tales spring from fantasy and they should be presented as true, not made up stories. In this manner, fairy tales produce a number of effects on the reader, the most important one being the consolation of the "happy ending". Finally, Tolkien considers both traveller's tales and beast-fables as narratives which would not fit in the fairy-story category due to their detachment from the world of Faërie, the former because they are simply set in lands far away within the boundaries of this world; and the latter because humans do not appear or just have a minor role in them.

Russian formalist Vladimir Propp is also a major contributor to the definition and taxonomy of the fairy-story genre. The next section will deal with Propp's conception of the fairy tale as a composite of different functions in different combination patterns.

⁶ In Schaper, Eva. "Aristotle's Catharsis and Aesthetic Pleasure." *The Philosophical Quarterly* (1950-) 18.71 (1968): 131. Web: Catharsis is "an imitation of an action "with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions."

1.1.2 Propp's Morphology

In his *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968), Vladimir Propp approached fairy tales in a manner which consistently deviated from Tolkien's ideas. Propp's approach, who took a compound of traditional Russian tales as his major *corpus* - does not focus on the meaning of fairy tales and their effect on readers, but rather on the structural units that conform the tale. He understands those units as the "functions of the *dramatis personae*"⁷. Propp's perspective focuses on the various forms in which those functions combined is what builds the fairy tale.

If Tolkien defined the fairy-story as a tale *about* Faërie, Propp's theory somehow opposes this definition, as he believed that the classification of the fairy tale in terms of theme is impossible in all cases. On this matter he said the following:

A theme is usually defined in the following fashion: a part of a tale is selected [...], the preposition "about" is added to it, and the definition is established [...], there being no single principle for the selection of decisive elements [...], it is logically inevitable that the result will be confusion, or, [...] an overlapping classification. (Propp 1968:7)

Propp rejects the idea of a thematic classification of fairy tales in favour of a function-based one. This is a logical consequence if we take into account Propp's formalist approach to language. As a formalist, Propp was concerned with the formal structure of the tale, rather than with its themes.

However, Propp's analysis of the fairy tale in terms of functions does not actually exclude Tolkien's idea of the "tale about Faërie." Rather, the difference between both authors regarding theme is Propp's conception of those in a narrower sense, i.e. "tale "about fights with dragons" [...] "about Koščeĵ." (Propp 1968:7) For Tolkien, however, themes tend to represent a universal idea concerning human nature at large, such as the "Perilous Realm" (i.e. Faërie), which would in itself contain Propp's narrower themes, such as "fighting with dragons" or "Koščeĵ." In short, the difference between them would concern Propp's close reading of fairy tales at the level of form, while Tolkien approaches them from a wider scope.

⁷ See Appendix A.

This interpretation leads us to the conclusion that Tolkien's approach is compatible with Propp's, as the composition of tales by means of functions is by all means possible inside Tolkien's world of Faërie. However, the Russian formalist is not actually defining the fairy tale as a genre; he is only explaining the way in which it is built. Propp's actual attempt at defining the genre, or sub-genre, does not appear until the end of his book:

The stability of constructions of fairy tales permits a hypothetical definition [...]: a fairy tale is a story built upon the proper alternation of the above-cited functions in various forms, with some of them absent from each story and with others repeated." (Propp 1968:99)

As is shown in this passage, when conceiving the tale as a whole, Propp is still only concerned with structure and form and not, as Tolkien did, with the notion of fantasy or the figure of the writer. In fact, Propp says that "uncorrupted tale construction is peculiar only to the peasantry [...] little touched by civilization. All kinds of foreign influences alter and sometimes even corrupt a tale." (Propp 1968:100) By saying this, Propp disregards the figure of the author of fairy tales completely, as for him fairy tales are *constructed* rather than written. He is, however, being true to his method, since the notion of the fairy tale as a construct of functions is a central tenet of his theory, in the context of which he defines those functions in the following way:

Functions of characters serve as stable, constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale. [...] The number of functions known to the tale is limited. [...] The sequence of functions is always identical. [...] All fairy tales are of one type in regard to their structure. (Propp 1968: 21-23)

Consequently, and as was mentioned before, Propp's theory does not exclude Tolkien's; it just works at a different level.

Finally, Veselóvskij's definition of themes, quoted by the Russian author in his text, establishes a difference between motifs and themes as follows: "By theme I mean a subject in which various situations, that is, motifs, move in and out." (Propp 1968:12) This statement establishes motifs as immutable elements that exchange positions within a theme, which resemble to Propp's functions. However, Tolkien's definition of the fairy-story as a tale about human in Faërie, a theme-based definition in Propp's opinion, would not be an example of a mutable theme, but of a

universal phenomenon. In short, and according to Tolkien, motifs and “sub-themes” of any sort would be integrated in his definition of the genre, as long as they do not clash with the boundaries established by Tolkien in his definition of the genre.⁸

1.1.3 New Approaches: Bettelheim, Zipes and others.

Both Tolkien and Propp focused on the classification and analysis of the fairy tale from a formal perspective, and they both put forward different definitions for the fairy-story, which, as was shown earlier in this paper, can actually coexist. However, subsequent studies on the genre went in a different direction. Works such as Bruno Bettelheim's or Jack Zipes' are no longer concerned with the structure or the construction of the fairy tale, but with issues of psychology and politics, which fairy tales actually embody, rather than with form and functions of the genre, as Tolkien and Propp did.

Bruno Bettelheim wrote his book *The Uses of Enchantment* first published in 1976 as a study of how fairy tales affect the psychological education and growth of children. Nonetheless, and in order to achieve this goal, the Austrian psychologist needed to explain his notion of the fairy tale. About this matter he said the following:

Nothing can be as enriching and satisfying to child and adult alike as the folk fairy tale: [...] more can be learned from them about the inner problems of human beings, and of the right solutions to their predicaments in any society, than from any other type of story within a child's comprehension. (Bettelheim 1991:5)

Bettelheim postulates that fairy tales have some kind of psychological power to solve some problems within the human mind. This idea goes one step further from that of Tolkien's *consolation*. According to Bettelheim, the fairy tale is able to give solutions, while Tolkien believed in the capability of forgetting about human concerns through the tale. However, the American critic Jack Zipes in his book *Breaking the Magic Spell* (2002) understands that “Tolkien was a producer of utopias who presented solutions and answers to the problems confronting

⁸ As explained before, anything that does not fit the definition of “tale about human in Faërie”, such as the beast-fable or the traveller's tale was excluded by Tolkien from the category of fairy-story.

humankind.” (Zipes 2002:177) As Zipes sees it, Tolkien did provide solutions to those problems; however, if we were to say that the British author gave solutions with his fairy-stories, those solutions would be those mentioned before in this paper, namely recovery, escape and consolation. According to Zipes, those three features of Tolkien’s conception of the fairy-story would become solutions to the problems of society; therefore Tolkien’s and Bettelheim’s idea would not be so much apart. Nonetheless, these “solutions” would imply that the reader does not deal with the problems in this world, because, as was explained before, these three features were for Tolkien ultimately meant to provide the reader with the last of them, consolation, which is actually not a solution to any kind of problem.

Bettelheim further differs from Tolkien in his notion of the fairy tale later on, by saying that “psychoanalysis was created to enable man to accept the problematic nature of life without being defeated by it, or giving in to escapism. [...] This is exactly the message that fairy tales get across to the child.” (Bettelheim 1991:8) Contrary to what Tolkien believes the fairy tale to be (“escapist literature”), Bettelheim’s approach is, at first sight, directly opposed to Tolkien’s. However, Tolkien’s escapism contemplated the idea that fairy tales occurred in an alternative world, thus making the reader “escape” every possible problem that troubled him/her in this reality, which is something that Bettelheim does not contemplate. Moreover, the Austrian goes on to say that

The message that fairy tales get across to the child [...]: that a struggle against severe difficulties in life is unavoidable, is an intrinsic part of human existence – but that if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious. (Bettelheim 1991:8)

Thus, his understanding of escapist literature goes along with the psychology and problems of this world and within this world, and not with those of the realm of Faërie.

Tolkien’s idea of the fairy tale also deals with religion, a fact that is not surprising taking into account his Christian and conservative background. For Tolkien the Gospel contains “all the essence of fairy-stories.” (Tolkien: 78) Similarly, and according to Bettelheim “Most fairy tales originated in periods when religion was a most important part of life; thus, they deal, directly or by inference,

with religious themes.” (Bettelheim 1991:13) Such a religious status of the fairy tale could explain the fact that fairy tales mostly deal with morality issues.

As seen above, Bettelheim and Tolkien disagreed in a number of aspects concerning the notion of fairy tales. Nevertheless, they also agreed on some others that are fairly relevant to this study. First of all, the Austrian author said the following: “it is unfortunate that both the English and the French names for these stories emphasize the role of fairies in them – because in most, no fairies appear.” (Bettelheim 1991:26) Although not in a straightforward manner, and even though he does not consider any second world; Bettelheim echoes in these lines Tolkien’s conception of fairy tales as being stories about humans in Faërie. Bettelheim agrees that fairy tales are not stories about fairies, as the *OED* defined them at the time when Tolkien wrote his essay. Moreover, he compares the fairy tale with myths, distinguishing them in the following way:

Far from making demands [as he says the myth does], the fairy tale reassures, gives hope for the future, and holds out the promise of a happy ending. That is why Lewis Carroll called it a “love-gift” – a term hardly applicable to a myth. (Bettelheim 1991:26)

By saying this, Bettelheim is stating along with Tolkien and Propp⁹ that fairy tales, in order to be defined as such, must have a happy ending, for a number of reasons. Tolkien believed that the happy ending was necessary to give the reader some sort of consolation. Bettelheim believes that fairy tales provide some sort of psychological aid (i.e. hope), which is basically the same thing. Even more so, Bettelheim discusses Tolkien’s thesis and states that “Consolation is the greatest service the fairy tale can offer a child.” (Bettelheim 1991:147) The contrast with myth also helps Bettelheim later on to reinforce the idea of the happy ending as something that is inevitable and necessary for a fairy tale:

The ending, which in myths is nearly always tragic, [is] [...] always happy in fairy tales. [...] The myth is pessimistic, while the fairy story is optimistic, no matter how terrifyingly serious some features of the story may be.” (Bettelheim 1991:37)

⁹ Even though he does not explicitly say this in the text, Propp’s last *function* is the marriage of the hero (see Appendix A: XXXI), thus establishing a “happy” ending, if we accept the social convention of marriage as a “happy” issue.

One last agreement between Bettelheim's and Tolkien's view of the fairy tale is that they both affirm that the fairy tale should be presented as true, that is, what "happens" in the fairy tale should be understood by the reader as the reality of things and not as something invented. For Tolkien's this "realm of Faërie" cannot be achieved if not considered true. Bettelheim phrases this issue in a different way:

Although the events which occur in fairy tales are often unusual and most improbable, they are always presented as ordinary, [...]. Even the most remarkable encounters are related in casual everyday ways in fairy tales." (Bettelheim 1991:36-37)

Bettelheim uses in these lines "ordinary" with the meaning of "belonging to the regular or usual order or course of things" (OED). Thus, it has to be "true" for the reader and therefore possible in this world. The same was stated by Ernst Bloch in his essay *The Fairy Tale Moves on its own Time* (1930) when speaking about two plays by Molnár:¹⁰ "Both deal with the genuine fairy-tale world of a petty bourgeois young woman of today, a world in which almost every part is false and nevertheless the whole is true." (Bloch 1930)

It is interesting to note that Bettelheim considered impossible to assign characters proper names in fairy tales, in accordance with most traditional fairy tales.¹¹ Such a tendency towards universality in character-depiction helps readers, for Bettelheim mostly children, to identify themselves with those characters. "The question for the child is not "Do I want to be good?" but "Who do I want to be like?" (Bettelheim 1991:10) This might be questioned, as what helps the reader, both child and adult, to identify themselves with the characters may not be their names, but rather their personality, actions and situations, although the generic naming of characters does support Tolkien thesis of the fairy tale as a universal genre.

Finally, Bettelheim's psychological approach understands fairy tales mainly as literature for children, a topic which will be subsequently developed in this paper. In addition to this, Bettelheim emphasizes the oral quality of fairy tales, which, in

¹⁰ "Molnár was a Hungarian playwright and novelist who is known for his plays about the contemporary salon life of Budapest and for his moving short stories" - <http://global.britannica.com/biography/Ferenc-Molnar>.

¹¹ Fairy tales normally provide characters with generic names like Jack (for instance in *Jack the Giant Killer*), Hansel or Gretel, or maybe names used to describe one quality or the appearance of the character as "Little Red Riding Hood" or "The Ugly Duckling."

his view, should be told rather than read: "The purpose in telling a fairy story ought to be [...] a shared experience of enjoying the tale, although what makes for this enjoyment may be quite different for child and adult" (Bettelheim 1991:154). From Bettelheim's perspective, telling a fairy tale is psychologically speaking more effective for the child's development as a person, as he says that "the fairy story communicates to the child an intuitive, subconscious understanding of his own nature and of what his future may hold if he develops his positive potentials." (Bettelheim 1991:155) Therefore, the effectiveness of the fairy story in the growing process for Bettelheim is much greater if child and adult "share the experience" of the tale.

Bettelheim's reading of the fairy tale as a genre with positive psychological uses in the growing process of children is shared by other theorists of the genre, such as Jack Zipes. In his book *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, first published in 1983, Zipes states the following:

The best fairy tales are supposedly universal. It does not matter when or why they were written. What matters is their enchantment as though their bedtime manner can always be put to use to soothe the anxieties of children or help them therapeutically to realize who they are. (Zipes 1991:1)

Zipes' approach, although it indeed touches on the issue of children, also points in Tolkien's direction. Zipes believes fairy tales to be "universal", meaning that these types of stories will always follow a pattern that is marked by its form, which is somehow similar to Tolkien's definition of the genre. As was mentioned before, Tolkien gives the fairy-story a universal theme, thus it actually "does not matter when or why they were written", as Zipes said, because they would all follow that universal pattern. Moreover, in his book *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales* (2002), Zipes points out a question that Propp already mentioned concerning the creation of fairy tales, namely that "the fairy tale gives full expression to the dissatisfactions of average people, and this is why it remains such a powerful cultural force among them." (Zipes 2002:158) Propp affirmed that uncorrupted fairy tale construction was only possible for the peasantry; therefore, it is unavoidable that those fairy tales dealt with themes and topics concerning the lower rural classes. Interestingly enough, in the earlier

mentioned *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion* (1991) Zipes, quoting Jameson, says the following:

For Jameson the individual literary form is a *symbolic act*, 'which is grasped as the imaginary resolution of real contradiction'. Such a definition is helpful in understanding the origins of the literary fairy tale for children because it immediately perceives the process of writing as part of a social process, as a kind of intervention in a continuous discourse, debate, and conflict about power and social relations (Zipes 1991:2-3)

Zipes, following Jameson's definition of "individual literary form", defines the fairy tale as a social tool that, being developed primarily by the peasantry, works as a subversive weapon against power and social conventions. Tolkien does not approach the genre in terms of these social features, although they can be appreciated when reading his works. Zipes believes this too, as he says about Tolkien that "his sympathies remained with the common people whom he regarded as exploited by capitalism and technology." (Zipes 2002:177) Thus, even though Tolkien did not belong at all to the peasantry his fairy-stories did belong within that social frame, at least from Zipes perspective.

Finally, concerning Zipes' socio-political perspective towards the genre, he made an interesting observation about Tolkien's social and political ideology, which can be used in favour of this study:

The importance of communality, fraternity and solidarity is striking in the writings of both Bloch and Tolkien as is the longing for a true home. [...] While both were anti-capitalist, Tolkien was more the reactionary romantic [...]. Tolkien placed the blame for the decadence of crass materialism of contemporary society on the hubris of human beings who sinned by seeking to change the world through machines and by using money to promote their own glory. (Zipes 2002:167)

Taking these observations into account, the study of Tolkien's conception of the fairy tale becomes inevitably wider. Following Zipes, the fairy tale's main features described by Tolkien in his essay *On Fairy Stories* acquire another layer of meaning. The issue of recovery and escape in the genre can be understood not only in terms of a refreshing view of things, or as a getaway from our problems, but also as an escape towards a past uncorrupted by the advances of technology and capitalism. Tolkien's "consolation" becomes under this ideology much more

determined, as it indeed serves the reader to cast away his/her problems through reading. Similarly, Bettelheim's "experiencing" in the fairy tales tackles problems which are a direct consequence of modern society. This explains why fairy tales in general and Tolkien's in particular turn to some undetermined archaic world which for Tolkien is the realm of Faërie.¹² Likewise, Zipes states the following on the form of fairy tales:

If all folk tales have essentially the same 'morphology' (even though the main functions may be varied), they all express the same thing, some kind of universal statement about the plight of humanity. The form itself is its meaning, and the historicity of the individual creator (or creators) and society disappears. (Zipes 1991:5)¹³

According to Tolkien's notion of the fairy tale genre as "stories about Faërie", which, as stated before, is a universalizing theme; the socio-political implications of fairy tales must be universal. Therefore, as Zipes says, they all have the same form, and thus express the same, which from a political perspective could be embodied in the aforementioned return to a primitive past.

1.2 On Fantasy

In the construction of fairy tales, Tolkien considered Fantasy to be a key feature of the genre. For Tolkien, fantasy is "I think, not a lower but a higher form of Art, indeed the most nearly pure form, and so (when achieved) the most potent." (Tolkien: 60) Fantasy is thus not a consequence, or a mere component of the fairy-stories that Tolkien wrote, but rather a productive artistic process. Even more, Tolkien describes fantasy as the most potent form of art, as it is the source of another "true" world:

To make a Secondary World [...], commanding Secondary Belief, will probably require labour and thought, and will certainly demand a special skill, a kind of elvish craft. [...] such difficult tasks [...] when they are attempted and in any degree accomplished then we have a rare achievement of Art: indeed narrative art, story-making in its primary and most potent mode. (Tolkien: 61)

¹² See for instance Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy Tales' Selection*.

¹³ These thoughts are derived by Zipes from Tenèze's study of Propp's and Lüthi's folk and fairy tale genres definition.

This is similar to what Wordsworth says on his Preface to the Lyrical Ballads:

For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true,
Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects
but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought
long and deeply. (Wordsworth 1800)

Thus, Tolkien's conception of the term is somehow a "romantic" one, as he believed in the need of a superior ability or skill to be able to use fantasy, in order to create the realm of Faërie. As seen in Wordsworth's "Book Six: Cambridge and the Alps" in *The Prelude*, imagination is something unfathomable in which the poet gets lost.¹⁴ Tolkien's concept of fantasy springs from that, as it is born to give shape to the imagination. However, as imagination is something so difficult to grasp, fantasy is consequently very difficult to achieve and thus "remains undeveloped; it is and has been used frivolously, or only half-seriously, or merely for decoration: it remains merely 'fanciful'." (Tolkien: 61) However, Zipes points out that

Tolkien was acutely aware, whether he stated this or not, that the essence of Christianity could only be conveyed to human beings in a secularized allegorical form, [...]. Thus, fantasy is not only art for Tolkien, but religion, secularized religion. (Zipes 2002:165)

According to Zipes, Tolkien relates fantasy to his profound religious convictions in *On Fairy Stories*. In addition to this, and in a romantic fashion, Tolkien establishes a difference between the notions of fantasy and imagination. The latter was for him "the mental power of image-making" (Tolkien: 59) while fantasy is rather a word that "embrace[s] both the Sub-creative Art in itself and a quality of strangeness and wonder in Expression, derived from the Image [...] essential to the fairy-story." (Tolkien: 59-60) Thus, fantasy works for Tolkien as a rational process which gives form to the images born out of imagination. Bloch also believed on the rationality of fantasy, in his previously mentioned essay he says that "what is significant about such kind of "modern fairy tales" is that it is reason itself which leads to the wish projections of the old fairy-tale and serves them." (Bloch 1930) Zipes also comments on this aspect of fantasy, by saying that "the fantastic

¹⁴ Imagination—here the Power so called
Through sad incompetence of human speech,
That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,
At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost; (Wordsworth 1850:104, ll: 594-598)

form of the fairy tale carries a realistic lode of what is open-ended and fragmentary but can still be realized.” (Zipes 2002:159) Then, even though Tolkien believes that fantasy carries its “older” meaning, i.e. “unlikeness to the Primary World” (Tolkien: 60), it is still wielded by reason, to the point that Tolkien says that “the keener and clearer is the reason, the better fantasy will it make.” (Tolkien: 65) Tolkien also reinforces this idea by contrasting Fantasy with Dreaming, which he considers a stupid and malicious confusion, as he regards Dreaming as an irrational activity “in which there is no Art” (Tolkien: 60) while there is in Fantasy.

Tolkien's last point concerning fantasy has to deal with its incompatibility with drama. He believes that “Drama is naturally hostile to Fantasy. Fantasy, even of the simplest kind, hardly ever succeeds in Drama [...]. The nearer it is to ‘dramatised fairy-story’ the worse it is.” (Tolkien: 61) Exemplifying this through the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1623), Tolkien defends that for drama to be successful, the audience members need to “believe” what they are seeing on stage to be possible in the “Primary World”, or “in other words, if they ceased to be ‘Fantasy.’” (Tolkien: 62) However, Tolkien also speaks about what he calls “Faërian Drama”, that is: “those plays which according to abundant records the elves have often presented to men.” (Tolkien: 63) This type of drama, according to Tolkien, is able to produce Fantasy in an extraordinary way and “their usual effect (upon man) is to go beyond Secondary Belief [and] [...] to experience ‘directly’ a Secondary World.” (Tolkien: 63) Then, if the experience of the human audience of this “Secondary World” is direct, they believe it to be the true reality, in the same way the fairy tale is understood as true by the reader, which Tolkien calls “Primary Belief”. However, as the British author says, Faërian Drama “is for them [the elves] a form of Art [and] Art [...] produces [...] Secondary Belief.” (Tolkien 63-64) Thus, following what Tolkien said before, if Faërian Drama produces Primary Belief in the human audience, in a way entering the Secondary World created by it; we need to give a different name to it. For this purpose, Tolkien proposes the idea of “Enchantment”: “Enchantment produces a Secondary World into which both designer and spectator can enter, to the satisfaction of their senses while they are inside; but in its purity it is artistic in desire and purpose.” (Tolkien: 64)

Finally, Bettelheim speaks about fantasy in the following fashion: “The fairy tale offers fantasy materials which suggest to the child in symbolic form what the battle to achieve self-realization is all about.” (Bettelheim 1991: 39) This approach to fantasy is not surprising coming from Bettelheim, as his study of fairy tales was made from a psychological perspective. Bettelheim gives strength to his theory of the fairy tale as a helpful tool for the growing process of the children by this statement. Even more so, he believes that fantasy is not only something that the children can see in fairy tales, but rather a mechanism they can learn from them, as he says that “fairy tales leave to the child’s fantasizing whether and how to apply to himself what the story reveals about life and human nature.” (Bettelheim 1991: 45)

1.3 Fairy-Tale and Children

Fairy tales have been considered for a long time as children’s literature. As was shown before, this is an issue that was taken into great consideration by some authors, namely Tolkien and Bettelheim, although others have dealt with it too.

In one of his letters, collected in *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien* (1999), Tolkien spoke about the issue of fairy tale as children’s literature in the following way:

I am not interested in the ‘child’ as such...and have no intention of meeting him/her halfway, or a quarter of the way... I have only once made the mistake of trying to do it, to my lasting regret, and (I am glad to say) with the disapproval of intelligent children: in the earlier part of *The Hobbit*. (Letters 1999:309-310)

As seen in this letter, Tolkien does not believe that the writer of fairy-stories needs to pay special attention to children when writing his/her tales, even more, he believes that doing so is a mistake, and one that he says he committed at the beginning of *The Hobbit* (1937). Similarly, Tolkien says the following in his essay *On Fairy Stories*:

The common opinion seems to be that there is a natural connection between the minds of children and fairy-stories, [...]. I think this is an error; [...], and one that is [...] most often made by those who, [...] tend to think of children as a special kind of creature. (Tolkien: 50)

In Tolkien's opinion, fairy-stories are wrongly addressed to children, as he does not consider them different to any adult when approaching the genre. Tolkien also believes that this link is a consequence of domesticity, as "fairy-stories have in the modern lettered world been relegated to the 'nursery', [...] primarily because the adults do not want it, and do not mind if it is misused." (Tolkien: 50) This is somehow similar to what Flieger and Anderson say in their introduction to Tolkien's essay:

Lang's Darwinian assumption that fairy-stories were leftovers from the Childhood of human development led to the corollary assumption that the tales were therefore leftover fare for human children, who would in the course of time, like the human race in general, mature into adulthood and put away childish things. (Flieger and Anderson 2014:22)

Their interpretation of Lang's Darwinian development of fairy tales gives a reason for the genre's link with children's literature, which is a historical evolution. Coincidentally, Tolkien's view also deals with the historical development of domestic arrangements, culminating with the fairy tale being relegated to the "nursery" field, as shown before.

Furthermore, Tolkien does not think of children as being more capable than adult of understanding the fairy stories they read, "only some children, and some adults, have any special taste for them; and when they have it, it is not exclusive, nor even necessarily dominant." (Tolkien: 50) Tolkien affirms that this "special taste" for fairy tales, that both children and adult may possess, appears in the early years of life only if it is taught from the outside, and shown to the children. Moreover, Tolkien affirms that this "innate" taste for fairy tales is enhanced with time if positively encouraged. (Tolkien: 50) As regards to this, Zipes states that "clearly Tolkien is writing a defence of fairy tales and fantasy, and he takes issue with those traditionalists who have relegated the fairy tale to the realm of children and the domain of trivial art." (Zipes 2002: 161) Zipes points out Tolkien's concern with the fairy tale genre, which he considers to have being "relegated" to children's literature. On this matter Tolkien said that "fairy-stories banished in this way, cut off from a full adult art, would in the end be ruined; indeed in so far as they have been so banished, they have been ruined." (Tolkien: 51)

From Tolkien's perspective, the above mentioned "taste" has to do with belief, that is, it is necessary that the reader believes what he/she is reading to be true for him/her to appreciate the genre. Tolkien says that the reader, even the child reader, is "capable of *literary belief* [...]. That state of mind has been called 'willing suspension of disbelief.'" (Tolkien: 52) However, Tolkien believes, as explained earlier, that in fairy tales, rather than having a "willing suspension of disbelief", the writer acts as a sub-creator that gives life to a "Secondary World" that the reader enters because he believes it is true. Therefore the belief must be *actual* rather than *literary*. According to Tolkien, when the reader is reached by disbelief, or incredulity; the fairy tales' "magic, or rather art, has failed." (Tolkien: 52) Therefore, the reader would no longer be inside that "Secondary World", but looking at it from the outside. This suspension, Tolkien argues, "is a substitute for the genuine thing, a subterfuge we use when condescending to games or make-believe, or when trying to find what virtue we can in the work of an art that has for us failed." (Tolkien: 52) By "the genuine thing" the British author is referring to the actual belief in the realm of Faërie, which is substituted, or even betrayed by the reader that employs that suspension of disbelief. Tolkien believes that this latter state of the reader "is often the state of adult in the presence of a fairy-story. [...]; they think they ought to like the tale. But if they really liked it, for itself, they would not have to suspend disbelief: they would believe – in this sense." (Tolkien: 53). Tolkien builds up on this topic from another perspective by quoting Lang: "Is it true?" is the great question children ask." (Tolkien: 53) This question may give the impression that children do believe in what they read in fairy-stories. However, as Tolkien points out, this may or may not be so: "They were more concerned to get the Right side and the Wrong side clear. For that is a question equally important in History and in Faërie." (Tolkien: 53) For Tolkien the "Is it true?" question which children supposedly ask is not indicative of belief or disbelief but rather of curiosity, or as Tolkien puts it, of "desire to know which kind of literature he is faced with." (Tolkien: 53)

As aforesaid, Bettelheim stated in a similar way that the children's actual concern when reading or being read a fairy tale was who to be like. Moreover, on the issue of polarity he said the following:

Since polarization dominates the child's mind, it also dominates fairy tales. A person is either good or bad, nothing in between. [...] Presenting the polarities of character permits the child to comprehend easily the difference between the two. (Bettelheim 1991:9)

The issue of polarization also raises for Bettelheim morality issues. Bettelheim affirms that "the fairy tale, [...], confronts the child squarely with the basic human predicaments. [...] in fairy tales evil is as omnipresent as virtue. [...] good and evil are given body in the form of some figures and their actions." (Bettelheim 1991:8) This polarization may be a consequence of the religious status of the fairy tale mentioned before, as was used with indoctrinating purposes. However Bettelheim also takes into account another type of fairy tale, which he calls "Amoral" fairy tales, in which moral polarities do not apply. Those type of tales "build character not by promoting choices between good and bad, but by giving the child the hope that the meekest can succeed in life. [...] Morality is not an issue in these tales, but rather, assurance that one can succeed." (Bettelheim 1991:10)

For Bettelheim, not only the acknowledgment of character polarization is productive for the child's growing process, but also fairy tales as a whole, since "fairy tales have great psychological meaning for children of all ages, both girls and boys, irrespective of the age and sex of the story's hero." (Bettelheim 1991:17) Furthermore, Bettelheim states that children are enriched by the forms and contents of fairy tales, even if they are unaware of this: "Fairy tales enrich the child's life and give it an enchanted quality just because he does not quite know how the stories have worked their wonder on him." (Bettelheim 1991:19) Tolkien however describes his childhood feelings towards fairy tales as being somehow neutral and not completely obvious until he studied philology "on the threshold of manhood, and quickened to full life by war." (Tolkien: 56) Moreover, even though the psychological implications of fairy tales on children may exist, Tolkien considers that

If fairy-story as a kind is worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and read by adults. They will, of course, put more in and get more out than children can. [...] But fairy-stories offer also, in a peculiar degree or mode, these things: Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, Consolation, all things of which children have, as a rule, less need than older people. (Tolkien: 58-59)

Bettelheim believes that “the fairy tale communicates to the child an intuitive, subconscious understanding of his own nature and of what his future may hold if he develops his positive potentials.” (Bettelheim 1991:155) However, and even though Tolkien does not exclude the possibility of children reading and extracting meaning from fairy tales, he believes that adult readings of these tales are much more justified, as for him adults are more in need of what the fairy tale is able to give. Moreover, for Tolkien adult readers of fairy tales are more capable of extracting meaning from the tales than children, contrary to what Bettelheim thought.

1.4 A Notion of Fairy Tales

For the purpose of this work the main source for the analysis of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) as a fairy tale will be his own essay *On Fairy Stories*. However, some of the ideas concerning the fairy tale as a genre previously mentioned will also be considered. In what follows I aim to provide a general overview of fairy tales, taking into account some features of the aforementioned definitions of the genre.

Firstly, the fairy tale is, in terms of form, built under the universal theme that Tolkien named “tales about human in Faërie”, as mentioned earlier, in which many sub-themes or topics can be included. This universal theme, as earlier explained, did not exclude Propp's theory of functions of dramatis personae; thus, the fairy tale may present these functions. According to Propp and Zipes, fairy tales are mostly elaborated by the peasantry, therefore most prominently dealing with the concerns of this particular social background. The vehicle for the form of the fairy tale is fantasy in the romantic sense, as it entails the power of the writer to give form to his/her imagination and create an alternative world. One last formal characteristic of the fairy tale worth taking into account is the happy ending, which all fairy tales must have.

Secondly, and in terms of content, the fairy tale, and the world in which its stories occur, must be considered as a true one by the reader, and presented as such by the writer. The purpose of this feature of the fairy tale is to create an effect on the reader, which can vary. For Tolkien, fairy tales served different purposes

concerning the reader, namely recovery, escape and consolation. The latter comes from the happy ending; however, as aforesaid, Zipes pointed out that these three effects of the fairy tale had a deeper meaning, as the recovery, escape and consolation were specifically pointing to a “glorious” past, void of the problems of the modern society which Tolkien despised, for which an alternative world, or the realm of Faërie, was required.

Finally, the fairy tale is a literary genre that has been considered as children's literature for a long time, relegated to the “nursery” field. However, its form, content and effects demand an adult readership because, as Tolkien said, they are in more need than children of what the genre can offer. (Tolkien: 58-59)

My analysis of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* will thus follow the above mentioned theories on the fairy tale, drawing from the different definitions given by Tolkien, Propp, Bettelheim, Zipes, and others.

2. There and Back Again

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937) was one of his first fairy tales, or fairy-story (as he called them), and is thus of great significance in the study of the genre. The novel tells the story of Bilbo Baggins; a Hobbit from The Shire who, with a little push from Gandalf the Grey, a wizard, sets off on an adventure to help a group of thirteen dwarves lead by Thorin Oakenshield, the heir of the throne of Erebor, the Lonely Mountain, to take it back from Smaug the dragon, who robbed them of their treasures and home long before.¹⁵ Their company runs into many different troubles in their way from the Shire to Erebor, and Bilbo, who starts off as a coward, useless, companion, ends up being the key to the success of the enterprise.

The goal of this analysis is to examine *The Hobbit* as a fairy tale, taking into account the aforementioned ideas on this aspect. Departing from this premise, I also aim to provide an approach to the content of the novel as a fairy tale, considering issues such as the notion of the tale as a *true* one or its effects on the reader. Finally, I intend to analyse the novel's status within the debate on fairy tales considered as children's literature.

2.1. Inside Information: On the Form of *The Hobbit*

My analysis of *The Hobbit* as a fairy tale starts by offering a formal approach to the novel. In order to do this, and as earlier mentioned in this work, Tolkien's global perspective on the form of fairy tales will be considered, along with Propp's functions of the *dramatis personae*, as the novel presents many of them, thus supporting my thesis.

The Hobbit starts off with the presentation of its little hero, Bilbo Baggins, a *hobbit* who at the beginning of this story does not quite fit the stereotypical idea of a "hero"; and how he got caught up in such an adventure as the novel relates. This seems to be at odds with Tolkien's notion of the fairy tale which, as told before, is that of a story about humans in Faërie. This is not so, for hobbits, as Tolkien

¹⁵ In this essay the form *dwarves* will be used instead of dwarfs for the plural of dwarf, as this was Tolkien's way of referring to Thorin's kin.

describes them, do not differ much from humans, excepting in their stature, which is much lower; in their feet, which are much hairier and in sight, which is better. Tolkien says that

They are (or were) a little people, about half our height, and smaller than the bearded Dwarves. Hobbits have no beards. There is little or no magic about them, except the ordinary everyday sort which helps them to disappear quietly and quickly [...]. They are inclined to be fat in the stomach; [...] their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair [...]; have long clever brown fingers, good-natured faces, and laugh deep fruity laughs. (Tolkien 2007:4)

Rather than a different breed, hobbits are one kind of human beings. The presentation of this “race” signals the inception of Tolkien’s use of fantasy for the creation of Faërie. However, not all of Bilbo’s features fit in the different notions of fairy tales aforementioned. Propp and Zipes understood the fairy tale to be a genre made primarily by and for the peasantry, dealing with their concerns. The beginning of *The Hobbit* presents a rather upper-class hero:

This hobbit was a very well-to-do hobbit, and his name was Baggins. The Bagginses had lived in the neighbourhood of The Hill for time out of time, and people considered them very respectable, not only because most of them were rich, but also because they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected. (Tolkien 2007:3)

Bilbo starts his adventure from a rather privileged position. However, and through the course of the novel this character and his companions go through many difficulties which are related to the peasantry such as hunger and thirst. The same happens with Bilbo’s companions, Thorin and his crew of dwarves, Thorin being the heir of a robbed kingdom who is condemned to live like the peasantry. It is due to the dwarves’ situation that the first of Propp’s functions applicable to the novel appears. The dwarves go to the Shire to hire Bilbo as a burglar to help them get back their home and treasure from Smaug the dragon. This being so, we are faced with Propp’s function VIII, “villainy”, as Smaug, even though the reader gets this information through Thorin, caused harm to “a member of a family” (Propp 1968:30) Thorin and his company’s lack of their home stands for Propp’s function VIIa, “lack”, and they approach Bilbo seeking his help, which stands for function

IX, “mediation”.¹⁶ Bilbo then, after a night of sleep, finds a letter from the dwarves asking him to be in Bywater, a nearby village, at 11 a.m. for which he only has ten minutes left when he finds the letter. He is then almost pushed by Gandalf to leave for the adventure, fulfilling function XI of Propp's theory, “departure”.

After Bilbo's departure, Tolkien builds the development of the tale with a repetitive scheme, in the following manner. Bilbo and his comrades face a series of foes, or villains and, in terms of Propp's functions, their encounters, follow a similar pattern. Following the Russian's designations the base scheme for these battles will be D-E-H-I-F, corresponding to functions XII, “the first function of the donor”; XIII, “the hero's reaction”; XVI, “struggle”; XVIII, “victory” and XIV, “provision or receipt of a magical agent”, respectively. The different encounters with the “villains” of the novel follow this pattern, with slight variations, as follows:

Bilbo and the dwarves face a group of trolls in the second chapter of the novel, *Roast Mutton* (Tolkien 2007:27). In this chapter, Bilbo approaches a fire light in the woods following Thorin's orders and finds a group of three trolls. He is then apprehended by one of them and interrogated, which fits in Propp's function D.¹⁷ The trolls start to argue among them, dropping the little hobbit, who is unable to escape and hides “outside the circle of firelight” (Tolkien 2007:36), fulfilling function E. Subsequently, the dwarves start to come looking for him, and they are trapped in sacks by the trolls one by one, excepting Thorin, who expects trouble when approaching the fire and ends up fighting the trolls, with a little help from Bilbo, which stands for the “struggle” of function H. After this, Gandalf comes and defeats the trolls by making them stay until dawn, which turns them to stone, thus fulfilling function I. Finally, the group finds the trolls' cave, in which they take provisions, but also three swords, will be later on identified as magical agents, therefore standing for function F.

After a brief stop in Rivendell “where Elrond lives in the Last Homely House” (Tolkien 2007:44) where the swords are recognized as legendary weapons of past

¹⁶ All functions cited can be found further developed in Appendix A

¹⁷ Although the trolls are villains in the novel, they actually act as ‘donors’ in Propp's terms, since the interrogation and battle which they have with Bilbo and the dwarves sets them in the path of receiving a magical agent, which is what Propp describes in function XII as pertaining to the ‘donor’.

wars (Orcrist and Glamdring), the company has to take a path in the mountains in order to resume their journey. When resting in a small cave by the mountain, the group is caught by goblins and taken to their leader, the Great Goblin, who questions the group (function D). Thorin, as the leader of the company up to this point in the novel, tries to convince the Great Goblin to let them go away (function E). Then Gandalf, who was able to evade the goblins when they caught the dwarves, appears killing the Great Goblin and leading the escape of the company; thus fulfilling function H.

The similarities of both encounters with the trolls' and the goblins' are evident. However, and despite the fact that the Great Goblin is killed, the "victory" of the company in this battle is a rather relative one. They manage to escape from the goblins and find their way out of the mountains, but they do so without Bilbo, who gets lost. There Bilbo finds a ring, and has to face Gollum, a vile small creature that lives in the deeper caverns of the mountain. The battle with Gollum is an intellectual one, as they "fight" with riddles. Therefore, the episode concerning this foe is somehow reversed and condensed. First Bilbo finds the ring, which will be later on revealed as a magic ring, thus fulfilling function F, and it is only after being in possession of this magic agent that he is able to fulfil functions D, E and H. As earlier explained, Bilbo and Gollum's battle is one of riddles, which Bilbo wins with the help of the ring, by having Gollum leading him to the exit of the mountain, thus achieving "victory" (function I) over him. Bilbo is then reunited with the company outside the mountains; however, as was said before, their victory over the goblins was only a partial one, because outside the mountain the company finds an opening without trees. This place "somehow it struck all of them as not at all a nice place, although there was nothing wrong to see." (Tolkien 2007:92)

Here, Bilbo and Thorin's group is attacked by Wargs, "the evil wolves over the Edge of the Wild" (Tolkien 2007:94), who often helped the goblins do evil. Therefore, even though the Wargs are a new menace to the group, they immediately start the "struggle", which correspond to function H. Moreover, the group, as happened with the goblins, does not achieve a clear "victory" over the Wargs, as they manage to escape thanks to the great Eagles who rescue them. Function F is thus fulfilled, as the group gets the help of a magical agent, while function I

remains unsuccessful. This section appears as a variation of the base scheme, since the Eagles who rescue the company also carry them near the Eastern limit of Mirkwood, thus performing Propp's function G, the "spatial transference between two kingdoms."¹⁸

Later on, and after the company's rest in Beorn's house, a similar pattern will be repeated. The villain, or foe, is now Mirkwood, a great forest that lies in the way between Beorn's home and Erebor, the destination of Bilbo's group. This is a magic forest where anyone who leaves the path gets astray to death. That is the test the group is challenged to overcome by sticking to the path, thus standing for function D. However, they are unable to do this and they get lost, which functions as the "reaction" of the group to the previous test. Afterwards, function H (the "struggle") is performed through the giant spiders of the forest, which trap the dwarves in their webs, excepting Bilbo, who, with the help of his magic ring which makes him invisible, kills many of the spiders and is able to free his companions. However, the actual defeat of the villain, which was stated earlier as Mirkwood and not its spiders, comes through a magic agent, the elves of the forest, who take the dwarves to their King's palace. There, Bilbo, who followed them with his ring on, finds a way to get out of Mirkwood and thus defeats it, therefore fulfilling function I.

As the narrative moves forward, the company reaches Lake Town, where they get supplies and equipment for their last journey up to the Lonely Mountain, where the dragon lies. Here, before the company actually faces Smaug, Bilbo is bestowed with the difficult task of opening a secret door on the side of the mountain. After a while, Bilbo figures out how to open the door and he is recognized as a "hero" by Thorin, who says that "Bilbo [...] has proved himself a good companion on our long road, and a hobbit full of courage and resource far exceeding his size, and if I may say so possessed of good luck far exceeding the usual allowance." (Tolkien 2007:195)

¹⁸ The Eagles actually take the company up to the Carrock. See Appendix C.

This series of actions correspond to three functions in Propp's theory, XXV, XXVI and XXVII, respectively.¹⁹ The battle with Smaug actually occurs in two different stages. The first of these would be Bilbo and his company, following a pattern which mirrors other confrontations with foes, as earlier explained. Bilbo first approaches Smaug with his ring on and steals a golden cup from his hoard. When Smaug destroyed the secret door and trapped the company inside the mountain, Bilbo goes down again towards the dragon and speaks to him, being interrogated and thus fulfilling function D. After this, Bilbo escapes towards the tunnel where the dwarves wait for him, an action that stands for function E.

However, at this point the narrative pattern experiences a variation, since Smaug, instead of battling the company now led by Bilbo, decides to fly upon Lake Town and burn it to ashes as a punishment for having helped Bilbo and the dwarves to get to him. Therefore, the function of the "struggle" (H) is fulfilled, yet not by Bilbo, but by Smaug and Bard, the latter being a character introduced at this point in the novel with the sole purpose of defending Lake Town. Bard is thus the one also burdened with the duty to fulfil function I, "victory" for which he pierces the only weak spot of the dragon's belly with a black arrow. However, and despite this fact, Bilbo will be the one acquiring a new magic agent.

Once the dragon has been gone for some time (the company ignored he was killed in Lake Town), Bilbo goes down to the dragon's hoard and finds the Arkenstone of Thrain, a "great white gem, which the dwarves had found beneath the roots of the Mountain, the Heart of the Mountain." (Tolkien 2007:212) Despite the fact that Propp imbued magic agents with positive connotations, the gem is in the novel actually poisonous to Thorin's mind, who becomes obsessed with finding the gem and barricades himself in Erebor, claiming the whole treasure for himself and refusing to give away any amount of it to the people of Lake Town who helped them.²⁰

The last part of the novel presents the development of what is called the "Battle of Five Armies" (Tolkien 2007:256) and Bilbo's return home. Propp's functions,

¹⁹ All three of those are related to what Propp calls 'difficult tasks' and stand respectively for 'difficult task' (M), 'solution' (N) and 'recognition' (Q).

²⁰ Seeing how the gem was affecting Thorin's mind even before having it, Bilbo decides to keep it for himself as his fourteenth share of the treasure.

which had been clearly performed in earlier sections of Tolkien's novel, become more difficult to identify in this last section, where there is no longer a clear villain until the armies of the Goblins and Wargs appear. However, some of Propp's functions do appear, for instance, when Thorin commands his companions to give him the Arkenstone the moment they stumble upon it, thus addressing an interdiction (stands for function II or γ).

Nonetheless, Bilbo has already the Arkenstone in his possession and refuses to give it to Thorin. Most importantly, Bilbo runs away from Erebor to give the gem to Bard and the Elvenking, who had arrived after the news of the dragon's death to claim part of his treasure, and ended up helping the people of Lake Town. In doing so, Bilbo fulfils function III or δ , the violation of an interdiction. However, a deeper analysis in terms of Propp's functions of the "Battle of Five Armies" would be beyond the scope of this work, since the positions of hero and villain, which are key points in Propp's theory, depend on the reader's particular perspective. From Thorin's perspective, Bard and the Elvenking are the villains, as he believes that they intend to steal "his" treasure. On the other hand, from Bard's and the Elvenking's perspective Thorin and his company are the villains. Therefore, the functions each of them realizes depend entirely on the perspective the reader takes when approaching the text and not on mere form.

The "Battle of Five Armies" ends on a bitter note, as Thorin, Fili and Kili (Thorin's nephews and the youngest in the company) end up dead. However, and supporting the thesis put forward in the present essay, the novel partake of a happy ending. Tolkien's "consolation" is possible through Bilbo's return home. In his leaving Erebor the social order there is restored, as Dain, Thorin's cousin, is crowned King Under the Mountain, and peace comes back to those lands. As for Bilbo, he goes back to the Shire with a small share of the treasure (one chest full of gold and the other full of silver) passing through all the places he and the company of Thorin went through before. Finally, after all his adventures, Bilbo gets to the Shire, and the novel, despite all the terrible things it narrates end happily: "You are a fine person Mr. Baggins, and I am very fond of you; but you are only quite a little fellow in a wide world after all." "Thank goodness! Said Bilbo laughing, and handed him the tobacco-jar." (Tolkien 2007:276)

Finally, the analysis of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* shows how the writer uses fantasy to create the Middle Earth: from trolls to dragons, elves, magic forests, giant spiders and eagles, Tolkien's imagination is given form in *The Hobbit* and at the same time defines the novel's world.

2.2. Riddles in the Dark: Content and Effects of *The Hobbit*

The theoretical questions concerning content and effects of the fairy tale largely appear in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Thus, my analysis of these issues in Tolkien's novel will consist of a brief series of quotes from the text linking *The Hobbit* to the fairy tale genre in terms of signification.

In the first place, *The Hobbit* abides to Tolkien's own notion of the fairy tale as a genre that should be presented as true to the reader. This notion is established mainly through the narrator's description of the tale's world, the Middle Earth, and its lore. As an example, when describing Bilbo and the company's stay in Rivendell, the narrator says the following: "The master of the house was an elf-friend - one of those people whose fathers came into the strange stories before the beginning of History." (Tolkien 2007:48) The use of the word "History" by the narrator – versus "Story" – is significant for this analysis, since it is in accordance with the idea that the world depicted in the novel must be regarded as a "true" one by the reader, thus reinforcing the veracity of what is being told. Furthermore, the development of the novel helps to create a "History" of this realm by showing the "historical" origins of sports, such as the invention of golf, which the narrator attributes to Bilbo's distant relative Bullroarer, who

Charged the ranks of the goblins of Mount Gram in the Battle of the Green Fields, and knocked their king Golfimbul's head clean off with a wooden club. It sailed a hundred yards through the air and went down a rabbit-hole, and in this way the battle was won and the game of Golf invented at the same time. (Tolkien 2007:18)

In addition to this, the narrator also proposes the origins of different proverbs; when the company is surrounded by wolves after escaping the goblin mountain, Bilbo says the following: "Escaping goblins to be caught by wolves!" he said, and it became a proverb, though we now say "out of the frying-pan into the fire"

(Tolkien 2007:92). Similarly, and after having spoken to Smaug, Bilbo asserts: "Never laugh at live dragons, Bilbo you fool!" he said to himself, and it became a favourite saying of his later, and passed into a proverb." (Tolkien 2007:209) These small details help the narrator create an actual history of the Middle Earth, therefore helping the reader give what Tolkien called Primary Belief to this alternative world he presents in the novel.

Moreover, the narrator also emphasises the veracity of the narrative in his descriptions of the different creatures of the Middle Earth. In chapter II, *Roast Mutton*, the narrator describes the three trolls in the following manner:

Three very large persons sitting round a very large fire of beech-logs. [...] they were trolls. Obviously trolls. Even Bilbo, in spite of his sheltered life, could see that: from the great heavy faces of them, and their size, and the shape of their legs, not to mention their language, which was not drawing-room fashion at all, at all. (Tolkien 2007:33)

Tolkien's narrator considers that the identification of those creatures as trolls should be obvious. However, the narrator seems to be appealing to the reader's assumed knowledge of what a troll is. Moreover, this idea is reinforced later on, when the trolls are turned into stone, as the narrator says:

And there they stand to this day, all alone, unless the birds perch on them; for trolls, as you probably know, must be underground before dawn, or they go back to the stuff of the mountains they are made of, and never move again. (Tolkien 2007:40)

Again the narrator assumes that the reader is acquainted with these creatures and with their defining "biological" features. Furthermore, the narrator expects the reader to have some previous knowledge not only of trolls, but also of many of the different "fantastic" creatures that belong in this particular Faërie that is the Middle Earth. For instance the Wood-elves of Mirkwood, which feasted in the woods while the company was lost in them, are identified by the narrator as follows: "The feasting people were Wood-elves, of course." (Tolkien 2007:154) Later on, while Bilbo is speaking to Smaug with "riddling talk" (Tolkien 2007:205), the narrator makes a pause in the dialogue to point out, again as an obvious matter that "this of course is the way to speak to dragons, if you don't want to reveal your proper name (which is wise), and don't want to infuriate them by flat refusal (which is also very wise)." (Tolkien 2007:205)

All the aforementioned creatures and features of the Middle Earth already suggest the existence of a magic component in Tolkien's novel. The *OED* defines magic as follows:

The use of ritual activities or observances which are intended to influence the course of events or to manipulate the natural world, usually involving the use of an occult or secret body of knowledge; sorcery, witchcraft. Also: this practice as a subject of study.

In this sense, the novel explicitly shows magic through Gandalf, who from the beginning manipulates smoke rings, changing their colours and making them move at will: "Gandalf's smoke-ring would go green and come back to hover over the wizard's head." (Tolkien 2007:13) Later on Gandalf will put off all of the goblin's torches in order to kill the Great Goblin. But Gandalf is not the one wielder of magic in *The Hobbit*; when describing the Wood-elves the narrator says that "their magic was strong." (Tolkien 2007:154) Moreover, near the end of the novel, when Gandalf and Bilbo are going back to the Shire, the narrator points out to an earlier scene in the narrative in which Gandalf abandoned the group, and explains that he "had been to a great council of the white wizards, masters of lore and good magic; and that they had at last driven the Necromancer from his dark hold in the south of Mirkwood." (Tolkien 2007:270)

Tolkien's presentation of such a world has a purpose which, as explained earlier, unfolds in three steps: recovery, escape and consolation, all of which define the novel as a fairy tale. In addition to this, and according to Zipes, "Tolkien's other world, his utopia, appears to be a romantic regression into a legendary past, an escape from the brutalities of modern day conditions." (Zipes 2002:149) Thus, Tolkien brings to the fore the problems of the modern, capitalist society in which he lived, thus providing the fairy tale reader a way out of those concerns by creating an alternative world which Tolkien defined as Faërie. This alternative world, as said before, has its own particular reality, and by giving it "Primary Belief" the reader would be able to achieve the effect which Tolkien believed that fairy tales possessed. In *The Hobbit*, these effects appear most clearly in the last chapter, more specifically in the song the elves of Rivendell sing when Gandalf and Bilbo pass through Elrond's Last Homely House:

*The stars are far brighter
Than gems without measure,
The moon is far wither
Than silver in treasure;
The fire is more shining
On heart in the gloaming
Than gold won by mining,
So why go a-roaming?
O! Tra-la-la-lally
Come back to the Valley.*²¹ (Tolkien 2007:270)

Tolkien is clearly making a critique of capitalism and of his modern consumerist society, urging the reader to “go back to the Valley.” This shows how Tolkien’s novel is indeed an example of “escapist” literature, as the British author guides the reader into his world in order to help him/her escape of the modern world that the author despised. Moreover, this song is also an instance of “recovery”, as it praises nature above wealth, thus showing a different view of reality to the reader of Tolkien’s time.

Finally, Tolkien’s narrative gives “consolation” to the reader and proves itself to be a fairy tale by virtue of its unconditional defining feature, the happy ending. As was shown earlier in this work, *The Hobbit* is a most turbulent, tragic and even bleak tale, even though it has its bits of comedy, mainly at the beginning of the novel. However, despite having a tragic ending, the novel ends up in a happy tone, giving consolation to the reader by showing that even after the darkest of terrors peace and safety can be achieved.

2.3. Children and *The Hobbit*

In previous sections of this work Tolkien’s position in considering fairy tales as children’s literature was discussed. Despite the fact that Tolkien was categorical in rejecting fairy tales as children’s literature, “the Hobbit has been regarded by some critics as merely a work of children's literature and by others as a badly muddled mix of children's literature and adult literature.” (Chance 2001:48)

²¹ For the complete song see Appendix D

The critical appreciation of Tolkien's novel has been diverse concerning this issue, which could be partly explained in terms of Tolkien's ambiguous comments regarding his novel: "I [...] have no intention of meeting him/her halfway, or a quarter of the way... I have only once made the mistake of trying to do it [...] in the earlier part of *The Hobbit*." (Tolkien 1999:309-310) He admits to have aimed unsuccessfully to write *The Hobbit* for children in the initial sections of the novel, which explains the comic situations which characterise the inception of the narrative. For instance, in the first episode the dwarves mess with Bilbo when they are dinning and they sing a song making the little Hobbit believe they are going to break all his dinnerware. Moreover, the episode with the trolls, although it is indeed a "battle", also has many comic touches through the trolls' dialogue.

However and as earlier argued, the narrative acquires a more serious tone as the novel advances, signalled by the increasing menace of the foes the company has to face in its journey. However, and according to Chance, the children's level of the novel had to do largely with the narrator, "The arrogant, unimaginative, and very "adult" narrator assumes this story about little Hobbits must be relegated to an audience of little creatures - children." (Chance 2001:50)

Following Tolkien's affirmation that the fairy tale should be a genre written by and intended for adults, the novel's narrator must be addressing an experienced readership. The "littleness" of hobbits is interpreted by Zipes in a different way:

A small fellow at the beginning of the tale, he [Bilbo] has won the respect of elves, dwarfs, men and a wizard. And this does not go to his head. Bilbo remains small. That is, he remains humble because of the vast self-confidence he has gained. He is now in touch with himself through the power of fantasy, and it is Tolkien's fantasy which allows us, too, to glimpse the possibilities of home. (Zipes 2002:173)

The smallness of Bilbo is indeed physical; however, in Zipes opinion, by staying small in mind Bilbo becomes great in the Middle Earth. This humble mind which Zipes talks about, rather than ascribing Tolkien's novel to the scope of children's literature reinforces Tolkien's theory; since an adult readership is more urgently in need of ideals which children are unlikely to have lost.

Tolkien's novel however, does have a children's level, which is emphasized by Chance as follows:

Tolkien calls his dragon Smaug "King Under the Mountain" [...] the phrase suggests the children's game of "King of the Mountain", in which various combatants try to topple a hill's resident "King". The epithet appropriately evokes the children's level of the novel used by Tolkien to mask his more serious purpose. (Chance 2001:54)

This reference to this game played by children links Tolkien's narrative to the field of children's literature. However, and as Chance herself says, this serves the purpose of masking Tolkien's more serious aim, which is to affect an adult readership and help the adult reader of fairy tales to escape the problems of his/her world. The link between the novel's structure and a children's game serves the purpose to provide a pattern which the adult reader will be able to identify by drawing from childhood memories. Despite this fact, *The Hobbit* largely falls beyond the scope of an unsophisticated piece of children's literature, both in terms of the novel's form as well as of its effects on an experienced readership.

Conclusions

The aim of this work was to reassess notions of the fairy tale genre in order to apply these to an examination of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (1937). For that purpose, the conceptions of a variety of authors, including the British author himself, related to fairy tales had been examined and assessed.

Tolkien's notion of the fairy tale as a "story about humans in Faërie" has proven itself satisfactory as a theoretical basis for the development of *The Hobbit*, as well as other considerations such as Propp's functions of the *dramatis personae*, or Bettelheim psychological approach to the genre. Moreover, Zipes' analysis of Tolkien's theory was rather helpful in clarifying the ideas that the British author tried to explain in his essay *On Fairy Stories* (1947), and in expanding his theory towards a socio-political perspective.

As shown earlier in this work, Tolkien's *The Hobbit* perfectly fits in the framework of the formal features attributed to fairy tales as described by Tolkien and Propp in their respective theoretical approaches to the genre. The Middle Earth that Tolkien creates fulfils the idea of an alternative world which is understood as true, and the structure of the novel can be analysed in terms of Propp's functions, also possessing what Tolkien, Propp and Bettelheim considered an unconditional formal feature of the genre, namely, the happy ending. In addition to this, both structure and content of Tolkien's novel are elaborated through fantasy, which was for Tolkien the main tool for the creation of fairy tales.

The analysis of the novel's content proves Tolkien's idea of fairy tales as "true", in the sense that they are stories belonging to an alternative world which has its own measure of reality. Furthermore, and as was mentioned above, *The Hobbit* is built upon fantasy, that is, the power of giving form to the pictures produced by the imagination, thus supporting the theoretical background taken into account for this work.

Considering the issue of fairy tales as children's literature, Tolkien's novel sits in an uncomfortably ambiguous position. However, drawing from Tolkien's theory of the genre and Chance's comment on the novel, *The Hobbit* is a fairy tale which begins as an attempt to please children, yet this initial intention is abandoned in order to evolve

towards a more mature and adult fairy tale, as Tolkien himself explained in a letter to Milton Waldman, cited in Chance's *Tolkien's Art*: "The tone and style change with the *Hobbit's* development, passing from fairy-tale to the noble and high and relapsing with the return." (Chance 2001:48)

Finally, the analysis of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* in terms of the fairy tale genre could be applicable to other works by the British author, such as *The Lord of the Rings* (1954), or *The Silmarillion* (1977), which however lies beyond the scope of the present work, but could be regarded as potential "food for thought" in subsequent research works in a near future. In addition to this, the present essay could not provide an in-depth analysis of the fairy tale genre paying special attention to gender issues, yet this could also entail an interesting line of research in potential approaches to Tolkien's work. Finally, a comparative study of fairy tales and feminist rewritings of the genre could entail a yet another interesting line of research in the near future, taking into account the formal and semiotic characteristic of traditional fairy tales and the contemporary reassessments which reveal a feminist literary agenda. In short, the fairy tale genre reveals itself as worth of academic attention, for, as Tolkien himself would have it, "the realm of fairy-story is wide and deep and high and filled with many things." (Tolkien 2014:27)

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Appendix A

This appendix provides a list of Propp's functions in order to clarify the ideas presented in point 1.1.2 of this dissertation, and to give a clearer view of Propp's formalist approach to the fairy tale. These functions appear described in Chapter III (pp. 25-65) of his book *Morphology of the Folktale*. The edition used is the same as the one employed in the elaboration of the dissertation.

Functions of the Dramatis Personae – Vladimir Propp

- I. One of the members of a family absents himself from home. Definition: absention. Designation: β .
- II. An interdiction is addressed to the hero. Definition: interdiction. Designation: γ .
- III. The interdiction is violated. Definition: violation. Designation: δ .
- IV. The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance. Definition: reconnaissance. Designation: ϵ .
- V. The villain receives information about his victim. Definition: delivery. Designation: ζ .
- VI. The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or of his belongings. Definition: trickery. Designation: η .
- VII. The victim submits to deception and thereby unwillingly helps his enemy. Definition: complicity. Designation: θ .
- VIII. The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family. Definition: villainy. Designation: A.
 - VIIIa. One member of a family either lacks something or desires to have something. Definition: lack. Designation: a.
- IX. Misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched. Definition: mediation, the connective incident. Designation: B.
- X. The seeker agrees to or decides upon counteraction. Definition: beginning counteraction. Designation: C.
- XI. The hero leaves home. Definition: departure. Designation: \uparrow .

- XII. The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc., which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper. Definition: the first function of the donor. Designation: D.
- XIII. The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor. Definition: the hero's reaction. Designation: E.
- XIV. The hero acquires the use of a magical agent. Definition: provision or receipt of a magical agent. Designation: F.
- XV. The hero is transferred, delivered or led to the whereabouts of an object of search. Definition: spatial transference between two kingdoms, guidance. Designation: G.
- XVI. The hero and the villain join in direct combat. Definition: struggle. Designation: H.
- XVII. The hero is branded. Definition: branding, marking. Designation: J.
- XVIII. The villain is defeated. Definition: victory. Designation: I.
- XIX. The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated. Designation: K.
- XX. The hero returns. Definition: return. Designation: ↓.
- XXI. The hero is pursued. Definition: pursuit. Designation: Pr.
- XXII. Rescue of the hero from pursuit. Definition: rescue. Designation: Rs.
- XXIII. The hero, unrecognized, arrives home or in another country. Definition: unrecognized arrival. Designation: o.
- XXIV. A false hero presents unfounded claims. Definition: unfounded claims. Designation: L.
- XXV. A difficult task is proposed to the hero. Definition: difficult task. Designation: M.
- XXVI. The task is resolved. Definition: solution. Designation: N.
- XXVII. The hero is recognized. Definition: recognition. Designation: Q.
- XXVIII. The false hero or villain is exposed. Definition: exposure. Designation: Ex.
- XXIX. The hero is given a new appearance. Definition: transfiguration. Designation: T.
- XXX. The villain is punished. Definition: punishment. Designation: U.
- XXXI. The hero is married and ascends the throne. Definition: wedding. Designation: W.

Appendix B

Lewis Carroll's "Child of the Pure Unclouded Brow" from *Through the Looking Glass*.

Child of the pure unclouded brow
And dreaming eyes of wonder!
Though time be fleet, and I and thou
Are half a life asunder,
Thy loving smile will surely hail
The love-gift of a fairy-tale.

I have not seen thy sunny face,
Nor heard thy silver laughter;
No thought of me shall find a place
In thy young life's hereafter –
Enough that now thou wilt not fail
To listen to my fairy-tale.

A tale begun in other days,
When summer suns were glowing –
A simple chime, that served to time
The rhythm of our rowing –
Whose echoes live in memory yet,
Though envious years would say
'forget'.

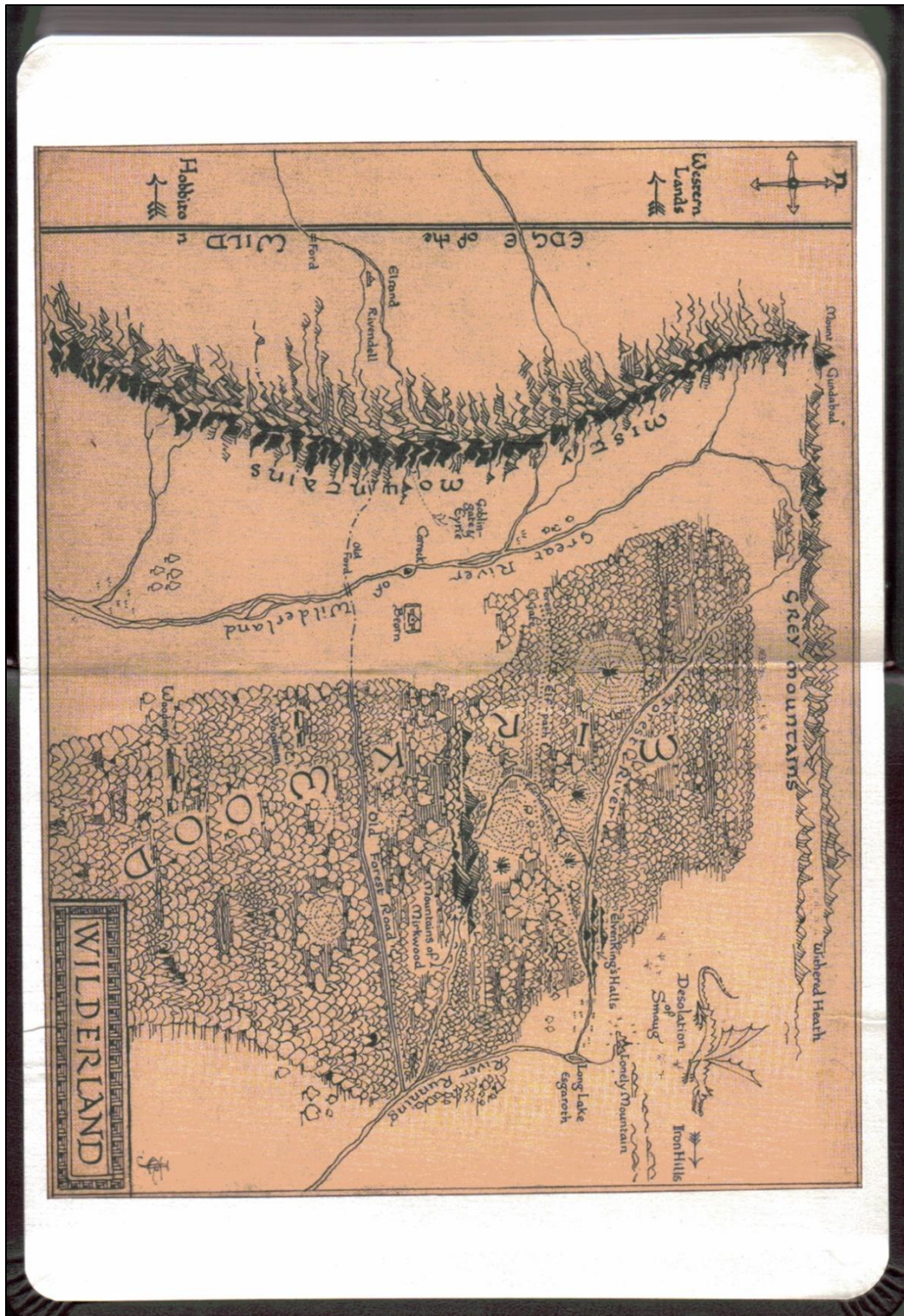
Come, hearken then, ere voice of dread,
With bitter tidings laden,
Shall summon to unwelcome bed
A melancholy maiden!
We are but older children, dear,
Who fret to find our bedtime near.

Without, the frost, the blinding snow,
The storm-wind's moody madness –
Within, the firelight's ruddy glow,
And childhood's nest of gladness.
The magic words shall hold thee fast:
Thou shalt not heed the raving blast.

And though the shadow of a sigh
May tremble through the story,
For 'happy summer days' gone by,
And vanish'd summer glory –
It shall not touch with breath of bale
The pleasure of our fairy-tale.

Appendix C

In order to clarify the second half of the journey which Bilbo and his company undertake, this appendix provides a map of Tolkien's Wilderland, which appears in *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007).



Appendix D

The elves' song appearing in chapter XIX of Tolkien's *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* (269), in which Tolkien's ideas against the modern society of his time appear.

*The dragon is withered,
His bones are now crumbled;
His armour is shivered,
His splendour is humbled!
Though sword shall be rusted,
And throne and crown perish
With strength that men trusted
And wealth that they cherish,
Here grass is still growing,
And leaves are yet swinging,
The white water flowing,
And elves are yet singing
Come! Tra-la-la-lally!
Come back to the valley!*

*The stars are far brighter
Than gems without measure,
The moon is far wither
Than silver in treasure;
The fire is more shining*

*On heart in the gloaming
Than gold won by mining,
So why go a-roaming?
O! Tra-la-la-lally
Come back to the Valley

O! Where are you going,
So late in returning?
The river is flowing,
The stars are all burning!
O! Whither so laden,
So sad and so dreary?
Here elf and elf-maiden
Now welcome the weary
With Tra-la-la-lally
Come back to the Valley,
Tra-la-la-lally
Fa-la-la-lally
Fa-la!*